



Chambers's Journal

SIXTH SERIES.

REMINISCENCES.

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IV.—SEYCHELLES AND ZANZIBAR.

IN 1863 the Arabic political appointments under the government of Bombay—Aden, Bushire, Zanzibar, Muscat—were reorganised, and I was the first Political Agent under the new arrangement sent to Zanzibar. A surgeon was added to the establishment; the reason given for this increase, as stated in the government resolution was: 'The medical duties attached to the Zanzibar agency have hitherto been discharged by an officer of the subordinate Medical Department; but His Excellency the Governor considers it most desirable that an officer capable of scientific research should be stationed on that coast, nor is it less necessary that the Political Agent should have an officer of intelligence with whom, at that distant station, he may be able to associate.'

A small steam yacht, the *Pleiad*, was also allowed to me, so that I might be able to visit the great extent of coast under my political control, and keep up postal communication with the Seychelles, the nearest point to Zanzibar where mail steamers then touched.

I went by those islands to join my new post. I made frequent visits subsequently to this interesting archipelago in the *Pleiad*, so I may as well note what I have to say of it on the present occasion. It is situated about one thousand miles due east of Zanzibar. The islands are of granitic structure, and rise steeply out of the sea, culminating in Mahé, which has an elevation of 2998 feet. Of the eight islands which form the archipelago, few except Mahé are inhabited, or they are occupied only by a very small number of families; one is devoted entirely to lepers. The total population is about fifteen thousand, most of whom are blacks; about five hundred are French Creoles. This group of islands was taken possession of by the French in 1742, and the present name was given to them in honour of an officer of the East India fleet,

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Comte Hérault de Seychelles. In 1791 they were taken by the English, along with the Mauritius, and now form a dependency of that island.

The vegetation is most luxuriant: cinnamon and raspberries form the ordinary undershrub on the hills; higher up are splendid tree-ferns; but the most interesting plant is the extraordinary *coco-de-mer* or double coco-nut (*Lodoicea Seychellarum*), found in no other part of the world. It grows as straight as a plumb-line to a height of 100 feet; it throws out only one gigantic frond-like leaf each year; it does not commence to bear fruit for a century, and the nut takes five years to ripen; the interior becomes a sort of vegetable ivory. The sea abounds in fish of splendid colour and strange shape. Many a good day's sport have I had here, but none so good as that described to me by Mr Swinburne Ward, the genial Civil Commissioner of the islands. I published his letter many years ago in a newspaper; but it is so good that it will bear repetition:

'I am happy to say that I enjoy the thorough confidence of a pretty large circle of friends; but there are very few to whom I should like to send this report of a small fishing excursion, and in whose firm belief in the narration I should have the slightest confidence. But you know the Indian waters and their extraordinary capabilities, and can believe almost anything respecting what they can produce. I sent all our gear, harpoons, lines, &c., over to the "Mamelles," twelve miles north of Mahé, in the early morning, in the *pirogue*, and went over myself in the whale-boat in the afternoon. The next morning we commenced fishing, and caught about three hundred fish before breakfast. In the evening we got a lot more sharks and a quantity of fish, some quite unknown to any of the men. One enormous ray took the hook, and gave us a deal of trouble before it succumbed to the lances and spears; it was 7½ feet in diameter. As we were

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bringing it home the boat was surrounded by suckers, and I caught two biggish sharks, who were snapping at it as it was lashed to the side of the *pirogue*. This kind of ray is not eatable, so we buried it in the sand at low-water-mark, in order to attract sharks next morning. Its tail makes a delightful walking-stick. Early next morning we went out again, and began by catching a large quantity of *bakshu*, a species that I don't think you determined, and a big fish called *Capitaine du Port*. As we caught them the men cut them open, and threw their entrails over the side. The presence of numerous suckers denoted the presence of the bold shark, so we put some big hooks over for their entertainment. We had not long to wait; a tremendous pull came at the thickest line, and our fun began. The moment the brute felt the hook he came up to the surface, not pulling at all. He raised himself about four feet, right out of the water, and came at the *pirogue* with his mouth open. (*Mon Dieu!* such a mouth!) Had he not been politely received by two lances in the stomach and another down his throat he would have torn half the side of the boat out. It took nearly two hours to kill this brute, who was attacking us nearly all the time. Its length was 13 feet $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches; eight rows of teeth erected! It was almost appalling as he approached the gunnel of the boat. After the entertainment was over we cut him open and took his liver out; it gave nearly a hundred bottles of oil. . . . Coming home we passed close to an enormous *diable de mer* floating quietly about. We went alongside of him, driving a regular whale harpoon right through his body. The way he towed the boat through the water was beautiful, and he also had to succumb to a rather protracted lancing. His size will give you an idea of his strength in the water—42 feet in circumference. We got him awash on the beach, but the united strength of ten men could not get him an inch farther.

'Altogether we made a pretty good bag. The men brought back about 1200 lb. of salt fish; we got twenty-three small sharks from 3 to 5 feet long, one *demoiselle*, 13 feet $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches in length. Its jaws now ornament my dining-room, and can be slipped over my shoulders without touching them on any side; another 10 feet long; one *rage fouet*, 7 feet 9 inches, not including the tail; and, lastly, the *diable de mer* before mentioned.'

On the 5th of May 1863 I arrived at Zanzibar. The Government House there was a fairly good one, but it was in the town, on a rather unsavoury beach; and there were few pleasant walks easily accessible from it. The rides were lovely; nothing could be more beautiful than the green lanes running all through the island amongst clove plantations, the foliage of which showed every variety of colour from deep green to brilliant carmine. It was a never-ending source of delight to wander amongst these on horseback

or on foot, to eat pine-apples from among the hedgerows, to drink the water of young coco-nuts, and to return home laden with the most exquisite white and blue water-lilies and with trailing bunches of the *Gloriosa superba*. The island is of exceeding fertility; in addition to the cloves, it produces fields of manioc, woods of coco-nut palm, magnificent mango-trees, and such oranges and mandarines as I have nowhere else seen in my travels.

There are no rivers, but numerous streams and springs, some of the latter peopled with little fish as brilliant as the flowers around (*Haplo-chilus Playfairi*).

No wonder, then, that we were most anxious to procure a *shamba*, or country-house, where we might retire from time to time to escape the heat and dirt of the town. One condition was absolutely necessary—that it should be on the sea-coast, so that we might go from one house to the other by boat. I searched in vain in every direction. One place, indeed, I did find which suited me exactly, but I was told that it was not available, and I was, almost rudely, requested not to approach the house. I had almost given the matter up in despair, when one day the Sultan, Seyed Majid, called on me; and as we were sitting and conversing by the open window of my drawing-room, he asked me if I had found a *shamba*; I replied that I could find none to suit me. One, indeed, I had seen, but it was not available. He asked me which it was. I replied, 'Your Highness can see it from where we sit;' and I pointed out the place in question, which rejoiced in the name of 'Boobooboo.' He smiled, and said that this place could easily be got; and that if I would entrust him with the negotiation he would arrange matters for me. I gladly accepted his offer, but stipulated that no pressure should be brought to bear on the owner. He assured me that I might rest quite satisfied on that point.

A few days afterwards his minister called and presented me with a key, telling me that the house was empty and at my disposal. I had never heard who the occupant was, and begged him to tell me. I learnt with astonishment that it was the Sultan's sister Seyedah—or, as the Swahili called her, Bibi Salemah. For a long time, he said, she had been anxious to come into town to be near her sisters, but the Sultan would never permit her to do so; now, however, that he was able to gratify both her and me, he was only too glad to give his consent. It was not till years afterwards that I learnt how different the case really was; the poor girl was devoted to a country life, and she was in dismay at receiving a sudden order to pack up and leave the house, as the new *Balyoos*, or minister, as the British representative was always called, wanted it.

Thus I was the innocent cause of all the misfortunes (if such they were) which subsequently happened to her. No scruple of conscience, there-

fore, interfered to prevent our thorough enjoyment of our new residence. The house was large and roomy, though without any architectural pretensions; it was surrounded on all sides, save on the sea-face, by groves of oranges, cloves, and coco-nut trees. Our dining-room was quite unique; the table was placed under the shade of gigantic orange-trees; the dinner was brought from the house, but the dessert was all around us. I am afraid we often committed what I now see to have been an act of wickedness, cutting down coco-nut trees for the sake of their cabbages. The undeveloped leaves on the summit, when cleared of the bark-like spathes, made a cylinder of about a yard in length and nearly a foot in diameter. This is the most delicious vegetable product that I know. Eaten plain, it is like filberts; sliced and dressed with oil and vinegar, it makes the best of salads; boiled, it was like nothing else in nature—a harmonious combination of cabbage, artichokes, and asparagus! It was the greatest treat to our friends in Zanzibar to come out and spend a day with us here and eat our coco-nut cabbage.

Meanwhile Bibi Salemah had gone to town; she had a very fine house of three stories assigned to her in the best quarter. The streets in Zanzibar, as in all Oriental cities, are very narrow, each story projecting beyond the one below it, so that the houses on opposite sides of the street almost meet at the top. In the house facing that of the Princess dwelt a Hamburg merchant, Mr R—. We had a good deal of informal society at Zanzibar, and used to meet daily at each other's houses to take a cup of tea in the afternoon or play a rubber of whist after dinner. During daylight the terraces of the houses were the usual places of reception. When sitting on the terrace of R—'s house, which had only two stories, I frequently saw the Princess at her open window, always, of course, closely masked, according to custom. She invariably saluted me, and as I was the only European in the place who could speak to her in her native language, Arabic (Swahili or the slave language was usually employed by foreigners), she was always pleased to exchange a few words with me. She never, however, alluded to the affair of the *shamba*.

In 1865 I had to pay a visit to Bombay; and when staying with Sir Bartle Frere, the Governor, at Poonah, I was taken so seriously ill that I had to be sent home at the first opportunity, and I never saw Zanzibar again. My health rapidly recovered after a short stay in England, and I received the appointment of Consul General at Algiers under the Foreign Office. My departure from India had been so precipitate that I could not complete the fifteen days that still remained to qualify me for a pension. The Government, however, permitted me to return to any place eastward of Suez, to enable me to complete my time, and I went to the Seychelles, which

islands I had often visited during my stay at Zanzibar.

Here I must relate the events that took place during my absence. While it was still uncertain whether I should return to Zanzibar or no, the surgeon was put in charge of the Political Agency.

The intimacy that had sprung up between Mr R— and Bibi Salemah ripened into love, and they determined to elope to Hamburg and be married there. He had a vessel loading with cloves, and he persuaded her to escape on board just as the vessel was ready for sea. He smuggled a boy's dress into her house, and made an appointment for her to meet him on the quay after dark. Probably she arrived too soon and was seen loitering about till the expected boat should arrive. The Sultan's guards had their suspicions aroused, took the boy prisoner, and carried him before the Sultan. Seyed Majid's astonishment and horror may be imagined at finding the boy his sister!

She was sent back a prisoner to her house, and a guard was placed at her door. The Sultan ordered that she should be sent to Muscat at the first opportunity, which of course meant that she was to be taken out to sea and thrown overboard. Somehow or other—I never quite knew how—she managed to escape, certainly without the knowledge of the acting Political Agent, and got on board H.M.S. *H—*, which at once got up steam and took her to Aden; there she went to a Spanish family which she had known at Zanzibar.

All this was, of course, absolutely indefensible. We had no right to interfere in a matter concerning the Sultan's family or the affairs of a German merchant. But had we not given her an asylum she would certainly have been killed; so would R— also in the fine old days when Europeans had no consuls to protect them, right or wrong. I have no doubt that this diplomatic impropriety did not hang very heavily on the consciences of the conspirators, whoever they were.

When I reached Seychelles to finish my period of service, I took my return passage in a steamer of the Messageries Maritimes Company. Just as the vessel was on the point of leaving, H.M.S. *Lyra* arrived from Zanzibar. Mr R— was on board. He had thrown up his business at Zanzibar, and was on his way to Aden to marry his princess. We made the voyage to Aden together, and during the few hours that the steamer remained there to take in coal, I was present at a double ceremony in the English church, and acted as interpreter in Arabic—the baptism of the Princess and her marriage to R—. We continued the voyage together, and many curious scenes took place. As at Zanzibar, I was the only person on board who could speak to her in her native Arabic; her husband could only communicate with her in Swahili; she knew no English, so he could never join in conversation when I was speaking to her.

At Cairo we walked through the native bazaar. She was dressed, of course, in European clothes.

She suddenly stopped and said, 'What would Seyed Saeed have said could he have seen a daughter of his walking, with face uncovered, between two Christians, in a Muslim bazaar?'

Seyed Saeed (Sayyid Said), better known to Europeans as the Imâm of Muscat, was a very great man indeed; he was contemporary with, and hardly inferior to, Napoleon Bonaparte and Mohammed Ali Pasha of Egypt, except in as far as the stage on which he acted was more restricted. It was he who brought the whole east coast of Africa under Arab sway. It and Muscat remained one kingdom till his death.

Bibi Salemah had been in the habit of wearing ponderous rings in her ears, which thus became so disfigured that she was obliged so to dress her hair as to hide them altogether. She once remarked that it was God's mercy that her nose was not like her ears, as she was the only one of Seyed Saeed's daughters who did not wear nose-rings.

We separated at Marseilles. Her husband was killed at the opening of the Franco-Prussian war when getting out of a tram-car, leaving her with three children, and, I fear, in very straitened circumstances. We kept up a correspondence for some years, at first in Arabic, but latterly in English. I give her last letter to me to show what remarkable progress she made in European languages, especially in English, which she had acquired in Germany:

BERLIN, 14th August 1884.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—How very good of you to take so much trouble in our case. I am truly very thankful to you. Since your last letter arrived it has happened

something to induce me to remain still a short time longer in Germany; therefore I must now wait a little before I can go to my lovely South, which I am always longing for. As soon as I am free of myself you shall hear more of me. I am indeed very sad to hear of your not being well; but I hope the air and the repose in Switzerland will do you good. My old friend, I really wonder you can understand my bad English. Can you speak or understand the most difficult of languages which I have ever met—German? In that case I am more able to write better letters. My love to your dear family and yourself.—Very sincerely yours,

(in Arabic) SALEMAH BINT SAEED BINT SULTAN.

The 'something' here alluded to was an order from the German Foreign Office to hold herself in readiness to proceed to Zanzibar; she went there in a German vessel. This was after Germany had begun to make herself felt as a colonial power, and it was thought that it might be possible to intercede with the Sultan in favour of his expatriated sister. She was, indeed, recognised by a few of her old friends, but Seyed Burgash, the new Sultan, remained deaf to all intercession on her behalf; nor could any effort of diplomacy move him to pity and forgiveness, or obtain restitution of her forfeited possessions. She had no course but to return to Germany.

I can hardly be taxed with any indiscretion in making these revelations. She has written the story of her life, *Memoiren einer Arabischen Prinzessin* ('Memoirs of an Arabian Princess'), both in German and English; and, though she does not give all the foregoing details, her work is a most interesting and reliable account of hareem life, both at the court of her father and of her brother Majid.

THE RED RAT'S DAUGHTER.

CHAPTER XVI.



GOOD-MORNING, Mason,' Browne said as he shook hands. 'I am glad that you were able to come up at once, for I want to consult you on most important business. Sit down, and let us get to work.

You were not long in getting under way.'

'I started directly I received your message, sir,' the man replied. 'Perhaps you would not mind telling me what it is I have to do.'

'I'll very soon do that,' Browne replied; 'and if I know anything of you, you will be glad to hear my needs. I want to see you with regard to a cruise in Eastern waters. I am tired of the English winter, and, as you are aware, I have never yet visited Japan. I've suddenly made up my mind to go out there. How soon do you think you could be ready to start?'

'For Japan, sir?' the captain replied. 'Well, that's a goodish step. Might I ask, sir, how long you can give me? Are you in a very great hurry?'

'A very great hurry indeed,' Browne said. 'I want to get away at the shortest possible notice; in fact, the sooner you can get away the better I shall be pleased. I know you will do all you can.'

'You may be very sure of that, sir,' said the captain. 'If it is really necessary, I fancy I could be ready—well, shall we say?—on Monday next. Would that suit you, sir?'

'It would do admirably,' said Browne. 'I may count, then, on being able to sail on that day?'

'Certainly, sir,' said the captain. 'I will catch the next train back, and get to work without loss of time. Your own steward, I suppose, will accompany you?'

'Yes,' said Browne, for he was convinced that the man was one in whose honesty and courage he could place implicit reliance, which was just what would be wanted on such a voyage.

'And how many guests will you be likely to have, sir?' inquired the captain. 'I suppose you will fill all the cabins as usual?'

This was a question to which Browne had not yet given any proper consideration, though he had practically decided on one person. The voyage from England to Japan, as all the world knows, is a long one, and he felt that if he went alone he would stand a very fair chance of boring himself to death with his own company.

'I am not able to say yet who will accompany me; but in any case you had better be prepared for one or two. It is more than possible, however, that we shall pick up a few others in Japan.'

'Very good, sir,' said Mason. 'I will see that all the necessary arrangements are made. Now I suppose I had better see about getting back to Southampton.'

Having consulted his watch, he rose from his chair, and was about to bid his employer good-bye, when Browne stopped him.

'One moment more, Mason,' he said. 'Before you go I have something to say to you that is of the utmost importance to both of us.' He paused for a moment, and from the gravity of his face the captain argued that something more serious was about to follow. 'I wanted to ask you whether you had any sort of acquaintance with the seas to the northward of Japan, say in the vicinity of the island of Yesso and the Gulf of Tartary?'

'I cannot say that I have any at all, sir,' the other replied. 'But I could easily make inquiries from men who have sailed in them, and procure some charts from Potter, if you consider it necessary.'

'I should do so if I were you,' said Browne; 'it is always as well to be prepared. In the meantime, Mason, I want you to keep what I have said to yourself. I have the most imperative reasons for making this request to you. A little mistake in this direction may do me an incalculable amount of harm.'

Though he did not in the least understand what prompted the request, the captain willingly gave his promise. It was easy for Browne, however, to see that it had caused him considerable bewilderment.

'And there is one other point,' Browne continued. 'I want you to be more than ordinarily careful that the crew you take with you are the best men procurable. I am not going to say any more to you, but leave you to draw your own conclusions, and to bear in mind that this voyage is likely to be one of the most, if not the most, important I have ever undertaken. You have been with me a good many years now, and you were with my father before me—it is not necessary for me to say not only as captain, but also as a man who is an old and well-tried friend.'

'I thank you, sir, for what you have said,' said the captain. 'In reply, I can only ask you

to believe that, happen what may, you will not find me wanting.'

'I am quite sure of that,' said Browne, holding out his hand.

The captain took it, and when he had shaken it as if he would dislocate it at the shoulder, bade his employer good-bye and left the room.

'So much for breaking the news to Mason,' said Browne to himself when the door had closed behind the skipper. 'Now I must see Jimmy Foote, and arrange it with him.'

He glanced at his watch, and found that it wanted only a few minutes to twelve o'clock. Ringing the bell, he bade the footman telephone to the Monolith Club, and inquire whether Mr Foote were there; and if he were not, whether they could tell him where it would be possible to find him. The man disappeared upon his errand, to return in a few moments with the information that Mr Foote had just arrived at the club in question.

'In that case,' said Browne, 'beg the servants to tell him that I will be there in ten minutes, and that I want to see him on most important business. Ask him not to leave until I come down.'

The appointment having been duly made, he ordered his cab and set off in it for the rendezvous in question. On reaching the club—the same in which he had seen Jimmy on that eventful night when he had discovered that Katherine was in London—Browne found his friend engaged in the billiard-room, playing a hundred up with a young gentleman whose only claim to notoriety existed in the fact that at the time he was dissipating his second enormous fortune at the rate of more than a thousand a week.

'Glad indeed to see you, old man,' said Jimmy as Browne entered the room. 'I thought you were going to remain in Paris for some time longer. When did you get back?'

'Last night,' said Browne. 'I came over with Maas.'

'With Maas?' cried Jimmy, in surprise. 'Somebody said yesterday that he was not due to return for another month or more. But you telephoned that you wanted to see me, did you not? If it is anything important, I am sure Billy here won't mind my throwing up the game. He hasn't a ghost of a chance of winning, so it will be a new experience for him not to have to pay up.'

Browne, however, protested that he could very well wait until they had finished their game. In the meantime he would smoke a cigar and watch them. This he did, and as soon as the competition was at an end and Jimmy had put on his coat, he drew him from the room.

'If you've nothing you want to do for half-an-hour or so, I wish you would walk a little way with me, old chap,' he said. 'I have got something to say to you that I must settle at

once. This place has as long ears as the proverbial pitcher.'

'All right,' said Jimmy. 'Come along; I'm your man, whatever you want.'

They accordingly left the club together, and made their way down Pall Mall and across Waterloo Place into the Green Park. It was not until they had reached the comparative privacy of the latter place that Browne opened his mind to his friend.

'Look here, Jimmy,' he said, 'when all is said and done, you and I have known each other a good many years. Isn't that so?'

'Of course it is,' said Jimmy, who noticed his friend's serious countenance, and was idly wondering what had occasioned it. 'What is it you want to say to me? If I did not know you I should think you were hard up, and wanted to borrow five pounds. You look as grave as a judge.'

'By Jove! so would you,' said Browne, 'if you'd got on your mind what I have on mine. It seems to me I've got to find some jolly good friend who'll see me through as delicate a bit of business as ever I heard of in my life. That's why I telephoned to you.'

'Very complimentary of you, I'm sure,' said Jimmy. 'But I think you know you can rely on me. Come, out with it! What is the matter? Is it a breach of promise case, or divorce, or what is it?'

'Look here, old man, before we go any farther,' said Browne, with great impressiveness, 'I want to ask you not to joke on it. It may seem humorous to other people, but I assure you it's life and death to me.'

There was a little silence that might have lasted a minute; then Jimmy took his friend's arm. 'I'm sorry,' said he; 'only give me a decent chance and I'm sure to make a fool of myself. I had no idea it was such a serious matter with you. Now then, what is it? Tell me everything from beginning to end.'

'I will,' said Browne. 'But I ought to tell you first that I am not supposed to say anything about it. The secret, while it is mine in a sense, concerns another person more vitally. If I were the only one in it I shouldn't care a bit; but I have to think of others before myself. You may remember that one night—it seems as if it were years ago, though in reality it is only a few weeks—you and I were walking down Regent Street together. You told me you had seen a picture in a shop window that you wanted to show me.'

'I remember the incident perfectly,' said Jimmy, but this time without a smile. 'It was a very foggy night, and you first kept me waiting half-an-hour outside the shop, and then acted like a lunatic afterwards.'

'Well,' said Browne, without replying to his friend's comments upon his behaviour on that occasion, 'you may remember that the night

following you dined with me at Lallemand's, and met two ladies.'

'Madame Bernstein and Miss Petrovitch,' said Jimmy. 'I remember. What next?'

Browne paused and looked a trifle sheepish before he replied. 'Well, look here, old man; that girl, Miss Petrovitch, is going to be my wife.' He looked nervously at Jimmy as if he expected an explosion.

'I could have told you that long ago,' said Jimmy, with imperturbable gravity. 'And, by Jove! I'll go further and say that I don't think you could do better. As far as I could tell, she seemed an awfully nice girl, and I should think she would make you just the sort of wife you want.'

'Thank you,' said Browne, more pleased with Jimmy than he had ever been before. 'But that only brings me to the beginning of what I've to say,' he continued. 'Now I want you, before we go any further, to give me your word as a friend that whatever I may say to you you will not reveal to any one else. You cannot think how important it is, both to her and to me.'

'I will give you that promise willingly,' said Jimmy. 'You can tell me whatever you like without any fear that I shall divulge it.'

'Your promise is all I want,' said Browne. Then, speaking very slowly, and as earnestly as he knew how, he continued: 'The truth of the matter is that that girl is by birth a Russian. Her father had the misfortune to get into trouble over an attempt upon the Czar's life.'

'A Nihilist, I suppose?' said Jimmy.

Browne nodded. 'Well, the attempt was discovered, and Katherine's father was arrested and sent to Siberia, condemned to imprisonment for life. He was there for many years, but later on he was drafted to the island of Saghalien, on the eastern coast of Siberia, where he now is.'

Jimmy nodded. 'After that?'

'Well, on the morning of the second day after that dinner at Lallemand's, Miss Petrovitch and Madame Bernstein left for Paris, on some important business, which I now believe to have been connected with the man who was exiled. I followed her, met her, and eventually proposed to her. Like the trump she is, she did her best to make me see that for me to love her was out of the question. Thinking only of me, she tried to put me off by making me see how impossible it all was. But instead of doing what she hoped, it only served to show me what a noble nature the girl possessed.'

'She is not rich, I suppose?' asked Jimmy.

'She has not a halfpenny more than three hundred a year assured to her,' the other replied; 'and she shares that with Madame Bernstein.'

'And yet she was willing to give up a hundred and twenty thousand a year, and the position she would have in English society as your wife?'

'She was,' said Browne.

'Then all I can say, is,' said Jimmy, with considerable conviction, 'she must be one in a million. But I interrupted you; I'm sorry. Go on.'

'Well,' continued Browne, 'to make a long story short, she finished by telling me the sad story of her life. Of course she said that she could not possibly marry me, being the daughter of a convict. Then she went on to add that news had lately come to her—how I cannot say—that her father is dying. It seems that he has been in failing health for some years; and at last the terrible climate, the roughness of the living, and the knowledge that he was hopelessly cut off for the rest of his existence from all he held dear in the world has resulted in a complete collapse. To hope to obtain a pardon from the Russian Government would be worse than futile. All that remains is to get him away.'

'But, surely, my dear old Browne,' said Jimmy, who had listened aghast, 'it cannot be possible that you dream of assisting in the escape of a Russian convict from Saghalien?'

'That is exactly what I do think,' replied Browne, with unusual earnestness. 'Come what may, if it costs me all I am worth in the world, I am going to get the man out of that hell on earth. Try to think, my dear fellow, if you were in that girl's place. Her father, the man whom she has been brought up to believe has been sacrificed for his country's good, is dying. She declares it is her duty to be with him. How can I let her do that?'

'I admit it is impossible.'

'Well, what remains? Either she must go to him, or he must come to her.'

'In plain words, she wants you to risk your good name, all you have in the world, your happiness, your very life indeed, in order to get a fanatic out of the trouble he has brought upon himself.'

'You can put it how you like,' said Browne; 'but that is practically what it means. But remember she is the woman who is to be my wife. If I lose her what would life be worth to me?'

This was the crucial part of the interview. For the first time it struck Browne that he was figuring before his friend in rather a selfish light. 'I wanted to see you,' he began, 'in order to find out whether you would care to accompany me to the Farther East. Remember, I don't want you to pledge anything. All that I ask of you is to say straight out whether you would care to come or not. I shall sail in the yacht on Monday next for Japan. We shall touch at Hong-kong *en route*, where I am to have an interview with a man who, I believe, has brought off one or two of these little affairs before. He will tell me what I am to do, and may possibly do it for me. After that we

proceed to Japan, where we are to pick up Madame Bernstein and Miss Petrovitch. From that moment we shall act as circumstances dictate.'

'And now I want you to tell me one thing,' said Jimmy; 'what is your reason for wanting me to accompany you?'

'I will tell you,' said Browne. 'I want you to come with me because I am anxious to have one man on board, a friend, in whom I can place implicit confidence. Of course Mason will be there; but as he will have charge of the boat, he would be comparatively useless to me. To tell the truth, Jimmy, it will make me easier to know that there is some one else on board the boat who will take care of Miss Petrovitch in the event of anything happening to me.'

'And how long do you propose to be away from England?' his friend inquired.

'Well, that is a very difficult question to answer,' said Browne. 'We may be away three months, possibly we may be six. But you may rest assured of one thing; we shall not be absent longer from England than is absolutely necessary.'

'And when do you want an answer from me,' said Jimmy.

'As soon as you can let me have one,' Browne replied. 'Surely it should not take you long to make up your mind?'

'You don't know my family,' he answered. 'They say I can never make up my mind at all. Will it do if I let you know by seven o'clock to-night? I could arrange it by then.'

'That would suit me admirably,' said Browne. 'You don't think any the worse of me, old chap, for asking so much of you, do you?'

'Angry with you?' answered the other. 'Why should I be? You're offering me a jolly good holiday, in excellent company; and what's more, you are adding a spice of danger too, which will make it doubly enjoyable. The only question is whether I can get away.'

'At any rate I'll give you until to-night to make up your mind. I shall expect to hear from you before seven o'clock.'

'You shall hear from me without fail,' said Jimmy; 'and if by any chance I can't manage it you will understand—won't you?—that it is not for any want of feeling for yourself.'

'I know that, of course,' said Browne; and thereupon the two young men shook hands.

A few moments later Browne bade him good-bye, and, calling a hansom, drove back to his own house. As soon as he lunched he wrote to Katherine to tell her how things were proceeding. The afternoon was spent in the purchase of various articles which he intended to take with him. For this reason it was not until after six o'clock that he returned to his own

house. When he did, the butler brought him a note upon a salver. He opened it, and found, as he expected, that it was from Jimmy.

'Dear old man,' it ran, 'I am coming with

you, happen what may.—Always your friend, J. FOOTE'

'That is another step upon the ladder,' said Browne.

SOME MINOR RURAL INDUSTRIES.

II.



DR FREAM, the accomplished and distinguished editor of the *Quarterly Journal of the Royal Agricultural Society*, drew attention in the June part of that periodical for 1894 to some minor rural industries that are not followed up in this country as they ought to be. Dr Fream is not an enthusiast who sees a fortune in a nursery garden and fancies that jam factories will be the sheet-anchor of the British farmer. But while keenly alive to the depressed state of agriculture in this country, and to the difficult problems it presents to the political economist, he does not neglect any matter, however trivial, which bears upon those problems. Like all other agricultural writers, he is surprised that so many eggs and so much poultry should come from abroad, and that the value of these imports should be so rapidly increasing. In six years—between 1888 and 1893—the value of these imports had risen from £3,480,000 to £4,454,000, and this in spite of the well-founded complaints of farmers that the markets for agricultural produce are not remunerative, and that prices are steadily falling. Dr Fream in his article takes up two subjects—the duck-fattening industry carried on so successfully near Leighton Buzzard, and the fowl-fattening industry of Heathfield and Uckfield. So clearly and ably does he deal with both these important subjects that it would be unpardonable impertinence to attempt to summarise his article; and readers interested in the matter should turn to it, and they will find that no point is neglected, and that the whole subject has been handled with the care, thoroughness, and accuracy characteristic of the author.

Some idea of the immense amount which British farmers lose through foreign competition may be gathered from the following list of staple food stuffs imported into the United Kingdom in 1893:

Butter, margarine, milk, cheese.....	£22,597,250
Bacon, ham, pork, lard.....	14,804,250
Barley, oats, peas, beans, hops, straw.....	13,814,506
Eggs, poultry, game, rabbits.....	4,742,343
Vegetables, pickles.....	2,879,239
Fruit and conserves of fruit.....	1,819,343
	£60,656,931
If oxen and bulls are added.....	6,213,447
Total	£66,870,378

Sir George Birdwood, in a letter to the *Times*,

asked if it is not possible for a great part of these imported products to be raised at home. He said: 'The buyers in the various importing houses of London are the most intelligent, the shrewdest, and the most energetic Englishmen of our generation, and as patriotic as they are able. They would buy all the eggs, poultry, and butter they want within the United Kingdom, provided they were as securely, cleanly, uniformly, and artistically put up, and as promptly and regularly supplied, as are those of France and Belgium, Holland and Denmark. They would prefer to buy British cheeses to American, were not the latter carried by our railways from Liverpool to London so much cheaper than the former. Similar remarks apply to all the items of the list.'

This is not the first time that the attention of the agricultural community has been directed to the neglect of poultry-rearing on a small scale, and to the possibility of a large number of people taking it up and adding considerably to their income thereby. The points that Dr Fream brings out clearly are that egg-producing and poultry and duck fattening should be supplementary to other occupations—that is, that they should be on a small scale, and that they require untiring attention. In this way, and in this alone, can they pay. They are not occupations for men who want to be away from home half their time, or who can comfortably spend £500 a year on their personal requirements. But they are occupations eminently adapted to thrifty, hand-working, intelligent people who are not too proud to earn an honest living with their own hands.

One cannot help regretting that so many of our small towns depend largely for their eggs, butter, and poultry on other countries. Surely there must be something wrong somewhere when one finds the grocers and the poulterers looking to France and Holland for supplies which one would suppose could be drawn from the immediate neighbourhood of the town itself.

The stumbling-blocks to the extension of the minor rural industries are undoubtedly that small producers have seldom any capital, and that they are not always intelligent enough, though one can seldom censure them for lack of industry; while the larger people, though they have the capital and the intelligence, lack the industry and prefer to leave the work to paid dependents. Therein lies the explanation of the almost inevitable failure; these industries are for small people

working with their own hands and brains, and not afraid of long hours and constant exposure.

At this moment, although small holdings are not easy to get, there are many places where a few acres of land can be bought at £20 an acre. Ten or fifteen acres would be ample; that would cost £300, while £350 would buy the necessary sheds and appliances, though some hundreds more would be needed to stock the holding—say £1000 altogether. An industrious man with a little hired labour would have no difficulty on such a holding in growing a large amount of produce, which would command a ready sale in the market-towns near, or would support him and his family; while the egg and poultry industries would be supplementary and would be profitable.

A clergyman whom I often used to visit had a small parish, a slender income, and a large family—the three often go together.

Like many of the country clergy, he had plenty of spare time, and he turned it to profitable account. His fruit, of which he grew a great deal, sold well; so did his eggs, vegetables, and poultry; while his pigs, of which he reared many, found a ready sale in a small town near. He had, he positively assured me, no private means at all, while his professional income fell short, value of parsonage included, of £165 a year. Of course I do not know, and cannot even guess, what his very large garden brought in; but this I do know, that he had so little glebe that he had to rent a good-sized field; and yet, while sufficiently popular and successful in his parish, he lived in rude plenty, and, seconded by a hard-working wife, found no difficulty in making ends meet. This vicar's industry was a good example to his neighbours, and added to his local influence and helped to fill his church; it certainly did not do him any harm.

Another case is still more striking. A keen Scotsman, a house agent, who has had a long apprenticeship to hard work at the Cape, carries on in the most crowded part of a large village, near two towns of some importance, a most profitable duck-fattening industry. This man has great control over his time, and much of his work is done by correspondence. He has a large walled-in yard and some rambling old sheds; but his space is extremely limited. The ducks are reared in surprising numbers, and sold to an hotel at remunerative prices. It is certainly a sight not soon forgotten to see the army of ducklings in that small yard, while the sheds are crowded with sitting hens, and artificial incubation goes on on a large scale besides.

No one supposes that there is unbounded scope for this industry, but in the country at large there ought to be an outlet for a good many thousand small people. The capital needed is not large, nor is it necessary to give one's whole time to it.

The demand for poultry, according to Dr Fream,

is very large, and greatly in excess of the supply; though, of course, plenty of authorities are to be found who contend that this statement is not correct, and that poultry do not pay. But when did authorities agree?

Both the clergyman and the house agent found that they could dispose of all their produce—indeed, that they could have sold many times as much as they could raise. A connection is not difficult to form, though one cannot deny that success would be more probable close to towns of some importance with a large resident population.

In some cases shops are supplied, but not commonly, as the shopkeeper naturally wants his profit, and expects a large share of the receipts for himself. In all the really successful cases—and they have not been few—the producer has been in direct communication with the consumer, and has avoided the middleman's charges.

Village shopkeepers with cheap land close to their houses might in many cases carry on, with the help of their wives and families, such an industry, especially near towns of some size, where they could dispose of their surplus.

One does not want to suggest that life should be shorn of all its attractions and enjoyments; but one thing is certain—that the public school and university man can rarely take up this or most other laborious non-intellectual callings with any hope of success. He lacks patient industry, or, at any rate, the right sort of industry. He likes to linger over his meals. He is not partial to early rising. He soon feels that he has done a prodigious amount of work and needs change; and he much prefers sauntering about and watching his paid dependants, whom he thereby very much hinders.

But to a man not accustomed to the refinements and elegances of life, one who can and will work like the house agent mentioned above, a man of short nights and long laborious days, there ought to be much more scope.

What foreigners could do we can do just as well. Many growing, flourishing towns offer markets that depend in the main on foreign supplies. Were all our eggs, poultry, cheese, hardy fruits, and butter to be raised in England, British agriculture might not be prosperous, but it would be far more prosperous than it is at present, and many thousand more families would live on and by the land.

Let me close my paper with a few words on France and Belgium. In the neighbourhood of sub-tropical Cannes flowers are grown in immense quantities, and the perfumes produced there are said to be worth £800,000 a year, or, rather, the exports amount to that sum. One hundred tons of Parma violets are said to be grown there, 1500 tons of orange-flowers, 500 tons of geraniums, 250 tons of jasmine, and 1500 tons of roses. The wormwood for absinthe and the mint for pep-

permint come largely from this wonderful district, as do also many of the strange poisonous drinks used in Paris. From Ghent, on the other hand, 752 tons of live plants were grown for the British markets in 1897. Great care is given to these minor industries, and more greenhouses are

being put up every year; while England, which is rapidly becoming *the one land* where agricultural depression is most acutely felt, is the best market in the world for all the surplus agricultural produce of more shrewd and industrious nations.

ONLY A DOG: AN AUSTRALIAN STORY.

PART III.

NOW a great terror took me again. The ruffian was armed; he had a pick to his hand, and carried a sheath-knife, I knew. What if, in a struggle, he should happen to disable or stab the dog?

'There was a desperate scrimmage going on. I could hear Jock's growls and snaps. Presently the wretch gave a sharp scream.

"That's one for Jock," I said to myself.

'But I must make him come in. I must have him to guard the shaft till I managed to get out. Never mind the man. My only thought was to get out of that accursed hole—that living grave. I called and shouted to Jock to come in. His training told. Furious as the dog was, he obeyed me, and came to the top of the shaft.

"You must stop here, Jock, and watch him—to mind him—to look out."

'And there he stood sentinel. Bristling all over with fury and his great fangs gleaming, he looked a formidable antagonist indeed. But how to get up? The shaft was too wide to cut foot-holes, except perhaps in one of the corners. And then the time. But a lucky thought struck me. The laths were of free grained stuff. With the pick I split from them some stout stakes, which I sharpened at one end, and then drove them into the corner of the shaft with the pick, one over the other, getting up step by step. "Now, Jock, stand fast; watch him, old dog!"

'One more peg in and I can get hold of the cross log. Another a bit higher and Jock was slobbering my face. I could feel the ruffian had moved away. One more effort and I was up out of that hideous hole—out of that deadly pitfall.

'I sank down on the heap of headings, and hugged and kissed old Jock. Never can I forget my feelings. My foot was useless and giving me great agony; but never mind that. I was up in the free open air again. How green the grass looked, and how bright the sunshine! Never before did the sky look so blue. Away at the very top of one of the ridges opposite, a great tree stood up clear against the blue sky; a flock of white cockatoos were whirling and screaming around it. How white they were, and how they glistened like silver in the sunlight! I have never

since seen a tree with cockatoos flying round it without the whole of this scene coming back plainly before me.

'But where was my would-be murderer? Why, just over at a little clump of wattle scrub, about thirty yards off, busy at something. Just then he looked round, saw me on the heap of stones, and gave a great start. I saw then what he had been doing. In his hand he had a long light sapling, to which he had lashed his sheath-knife. This then was a spear, and with it he would be able to keep Jock off and stab him when he got the chance. But I was out of the hole, and though I had no weapon save the pick he had left behind him, and couldn't stand upright, still there were lots of good stones round me. You know you can't beat bush riddies at flinging stones; I used to be a regular don at it. If it came to a duel with stones, I wasn't frightened of coming off second best.

'As he came slowly forward I saw that he limped a bit, and there was a big blood-stain on his moleskin trousers. "That's Jock's work," I thought, as I raised myself up on one knee and gathered plenty of handy-sized ammunition, making the dog keep well in. Tom saw my determined stand, and although he knew he had hurt me badly with the big stone, he didn't know how much I was crippled. He stood watching me for a while, calculating the chances, and then, after shaking his fist at me and using some very bad language, he moved slowly off to the tents. I could think of nothing better to do after that than to give old Jock another good hug, then crawl painfully across to the same clump of wattles, fix myself up a spear like his, and get back to my heap of stones. Now by good luck, on leaving camp that morning, I had brought my billy with me, half-full of cold tea, and there it was still untouched where I put it before going down that deadly shaft. I was parched with thirst, and I had then the sweetest drink of all my life.'

I have tried to give you this story as faithfully as I can repeat it, but no words of mine can convey any idea of the dramatic manner in which it was told, or, rather, acted to me. My friend, Morris, had gradually become very excited, and

when he had brought the story up to his arrival at the fateful gully he got up from his chair, moving restlessly up and down. Jock had jumped down too, and kept following him about, whimpering and giving little, short barks of suppressed excitement. Then Jim acted all the scene in the shaft. He caught up a tray from the table to show how he guarded his head from the first stone. Then up about so high on the wall was the height of the drive. This was the way he crouched down; and so on. But when, to imitate the whistle-call, he put his fingers in his mouth and blew it so shrilly as to make the house ring again, little Jock lost all control over himself. He burst out into furious barking; he flew here, there, everywhere, after invisible enemies, and tore round and round Jim as though to protect him from some, by us, unseen danger. By the time Morris came to finding the billy of tea he was calmer, and sat down again. Jock also returned to his post on the chair.

'There's something very queer in the way your little dog goes on,' said Jim. 'One would almost think he knew what I was talking about. I can't make it out at all.'

Now to me, who was quietly watching the whole scene and knew the dog's habits, it was stranger still. I felt convinced that I had seen two actors going through a performance they were perfectly familiar with—I am of that opinion still. How one of them came to know his part in it I had just heard. But what about the other—the dog?

'So now,' continued Jim, 'I have explained to you how my old dog helped to save me from a miserable death, and how I got this crippled foot, and perhaps that is all you want to know.'

'Excuse me, my friend,' I replied. 'You have certainly got out of the shaft, and are sitting on the headings just now with a make-shift spear, a crushed foot, and a dog, in the heart of the ranges, and a murderous ruffian prowling round; but so far from being saved yet, I should say you were in one of the tightest places possible; so fire away. I want the yarn, the whole yarn, and nothing but the whole yarn.'

'All right,' replied Jim; 'then off we go again.'

'You will understand that I had been watching my worthy mate pretty closely. As I got back with the spear I saw him go up the flat with the bridles, and presently come back with all three horses. He then quietly saddled mine and the pack-horse, pulled down both tents, picked out the best—mine of course—put all the rations, the tent, and everything else he could lay his hands on, including the other saddle, on the pack-horse; piled up the other tent, my blankets, and all the rest of the things he didn't mean to take, in a heap, and set fire to them. And I, boss, had to sit there watching him. I tried, but found I could not move freely enough to do any good.

'I didn't want any one to tell me what his game was; he was just going to leave me there, in a crippled state, to starve. Not a nice lookout, eh? but just heaven compared with being down that cursed hole. When he had everything packed up and ready he rode towards me till within speaking distance, still holding his spear, and shouted:

"You stick there, you —! I missed you one way, but I've got you another. I can see you're cooked, or you wouldn't have let me take the horses and things so quiet. Just stop where you are and starve; you've neither tucker nor shelter. You'd better have let me settle you in the shaft short and sweet, you know. Well, I shan't forget you or your blasted lapdog; he has given me something to remember him by, so I'll give you a look up in a few days just to get that bit of coin you're keeping so kindly for me, and I won't forget this time to bring a shooting iron with me in case it's wanted. So long, my hearty, and keep your pecker up."

'And with that off he went, leading the pack-horse and driving the other with the bridle tied up before him. I gave him a fair time to get well away, and then started for the camp. I had a great job to get over, for I was pretty well loaded, my shirt being full of stones in case he came back on me sudden-like, and I had a good drink crossing the bed of the creek. First I put down the stones, and went down to the creek for another load. You mustn't laugh at the stones, boss; they were the only things I could depend on to beat him off with if he attacked me. People may think nothing of stones who can't throw straight, but I tell you, in the hands of a man who can, they are a very effective weapon. Then I overhauled the wreck. The fire hadn't done as much harm as I thought; there was no wind, and the things had only smouldered. I rooted out a good many pieces of the tent, some parts of my blankets, a few of my clothes, and two bags, in one of which I got a little bit of salt meat—about a pound and a half. Then under the bushes I had lain down to sleep on was a small saddle-pouch. In that I got three ship's biscuits, about half-a-pound of rice tied up in a sock, and a cake of tobacco. In another old jumper I got a little bag of tea and sugar mixed—enough to make three small pots. Besides that I found half a johnny cake I left from breakfast, and Jock sniffed out of the bushes a piece of cooked meat—about two pounds—that the ruffian had slung away. So this was our stock of provisions—three biscuits, half-a-pound of rice, half a johnny cake, two pounds cooked meat, a pound and a half raw meat, tea and sugar for three pots, and a cake of tobacco; so we weren't starved yet by a long way. By this time my foot had got so bad and swollen that it had to be looked to. Before starting I thought of the time, and pulled out father's old silver watch. Well, what time do you think it was? Just ten o'clock. All this business I have

been telling you of had only taken about three hours and a half from the time we left the camp after breakfast. Putting the watch down beside me, I started to cut off my boot. There was plenty of blood in it, and the foot was a terrible sight. I'll just tell you what the matter was. The big stone had come down fair on the instep and smashed nearly all the bones of the top of the foot, some into two or three pieces, and some of these were sticking through the skin. I noted this afterwards, for the pain in getting the boot off was so great that I fainted away. When I came to my senses poor Jock was whining and licking my face in great trouble.

'I had to take myself up pretty sharp; there must be no more fainting business if I was ever to win free out of this fix. I did the best I could to get the foot into shape, bandaged it with unburnt bits of my shirts, and then with strips of the tent, with some thin pieces of bark for splints. It wasn't a great job for a doctor, but I got wonderful relief, and, with one of the tent forks for a crutch, felt a deal more active. But time flies. I looked at the watch; it was now twelve o'clock. Something must be done to get away from this place before night. I would not stop there for all the world. Now I had got an idea in my head, and had been turning it over all the time I was dressing my foot.

'This scoundrel Lawrence was, as I have said, a very poor bushman and a very bad rider. I had led the pack-horse all the way here, and it had taken me all my time, too, in places. So I felt sure he could never lead a pack-horse and drive another before him in country like this. I was certain of that. If he managed to get the horse a mile away from the camp it would give him all he knew. There was a chance he might only go a short distance off and camp, but I didn't think so; Jock showed no signs of uneasiness. My idea was he would lose the horse before he had gone very far and not trouble about it, never thinking it possible for me, in my crippled state, to either find or catch an unhobbled horse. Something must be risked, and I determined to put Jock's training to the test. Mr Oxley and I had trained the two dogs,

among other things, to go forward at a certain signal in wide circles and head in anything they found. They would work thus singly or together, on either horse or cattle camps. I crawled down to where the horses had started from, put Jock on the scent, talked to him, showed him the whistle, blew the signal, with the cry, 'Seek forward—seek forward,' moving my arm round in the direction he was to go, and then gave the signal again. Jock looked at me, pricked his ears, gave one snuff at the trail, and was off down the Flat full gallop. I got back to my stones and spear, and sat with the watch in my hand counting the minutes. Oh, how slowly they went! Oh, how lonely I felt! If poor old Jock was only back. What if he should run foul of Lawrence and think I meant him to be rounded in and get wounded? Oh, those weary hands on the watch, how slow they went! Minutes seemed like hours. It was just half-past twelve when I started Jock. It got slowly, so very slowly, to one o'clock. I'll wait the hour, and then try to recall him. I filled the first pipe I had smoked since breakfast, and thought I would count the puffs; but I couldn't smoke. At last it came to half-past one. Well, if that was only one hour, there can't be more than half-a-dozen in a whole day.—What!—eh? Was that a dog's challenge? Yes; but how faint!—It's Jock! Hurrah! And he has got something. What is it? Oh, if he has come across that ruffian and tried to round him in! There's one consolation if he does and the man is on horse-back: he will make the horse throw him, to a certainty.

'That's something like the way I fidgeted and fumed.

'But it was Jock's voice, and it came steadily nearer and nearer. He was fetching something in. A minute or two more, and, oh, what a leap my heart gave!—for there, just turning up the Flat, was the spare horse which Jock was bringing along like a regular artist, right up to where I was standing. The bridle was on him, fastened up. I trembled so I could hardly limp forward to catch him; but at last the reins were in my hand. Thank God for it!

THE LION OF SOUTH AMERICA.



HE lion, as the puma is commonly called in South America, has of late years become very rare in most parts of that country, as it is a very shy, wary animal, and is only to be found in lonely, uninhabited spots, far away from the haunts of man. Though it goes by the name of the lion, it has none of the savage qualities of the king of beasts, and even when at bay is an arrant coward, unlike all other members of the feline race, which are accustomed

to fight for life until the last gasp. The jaguar, or South American tiger, is a much more formidable animal, and has often been known to attack a man, a feat hardly ever attempted by the puma. The puma's strength, however, for an animal of its size, is astonishing, and it is able to carry off a sheep with the greatest ease; though, if pursued, it will relinquish its prey, and make off without attempting to show fight.

Pumas are a terrible scourge to flock-owners, as the havoc they commit among the sheep and young

calves is very great, and they are so quick and silent in their movements that it is extremely difficult to catch them in the act of carrying off their prey. A friend of mine, who was for some years sheep-farming in the River Plate, thus describes his experience of these animals:

'I was some years ago on the outside pampas in charge of a flock of sheep which a puma used to visit constantly. The grazing-land round was covered with immensely tall clumps of a reedy kind of grass called *paja*, and there were but few houses in the neighbourhood. About a league from my ranch were two high hills, covered with large boulders of stone; and it was in holes beneath these the pumas had their lairs. There were two flocks of sheep at the house, and both I and the native in charge of the other flock had been provided with rifles and plenty of cartridges to kill the puma if possible. One corral, or sheep-pen, was a little distance away in front of the house; but, strange to say, our friend made no attempt to carry off a sheep from the flock which was confined there, but always came to the corral of the one I was in charge of, which was quite close to the house—in fact, the window looked out into the corral itself. The reason we assigned for this was that a large plot of maize had been planted on one side of it, and at the far end the clumps of *paja* grass grew right up to the corral fence; while the corral of the flock in front of the house stood upon a slight hill, and had no cover on any side. We had about half-a-dozen dogs, which used to sleep outside; but they never appeared to be aware of the puma's approach until the sheep came dashing madly from the quarter it had entered. The cunning beast seemed to know the nights we were on the watch, and would sometimes let a week or more pass without paying us a visit; then, just as we were beginning to relax a little in our vigilance, we would hear the sheep rushing about in the corral; and when we dashed out through the window, which was always open, we would find them huddled up in a corner, while here and there three or four were lying kicking on the ground. These all had their necks broken by a blow from the animal's paw, done either in play or to get them out of its road while searching for a fat animal to carry off, as it never failed to select one of the best sheep in the flock. The whole affair was over so quickly that, though several times, I am sure, scarcely two minutes had elapsed before we were on the far side of the corral, we could never discover any sign of the robber; and I often found myself wondering if there was not something supernatural about the animal's movements, so speedily and silently did it disappear. The dogs, however, always used to follow it into the open, and twice were so close on its tracks that they made it leave its prey.

We used to mount our horses when we heard them giving tongue; and on both occasions we

found the animals the puma was carrying off lying untouched, but perfectly dead, in the long grass. Both of them had the marks of the puma's teeth in one of their fore-legs, as well as having their necks broken; for the powerful creature used evidently to carry off its victims slung over its back, holding one of their fore-legs in its mouth, while the two hind ones trailed upon the ground on the other side. Even when the puma got off undisturbed with its prey, it was an easy matter with the dogs to find the carcass next day, hidden in a clump of grass, but with the fattest parts, the breast and kidneys, devoured. We used to poison the remains; but though numbers of foxes, hawks, and other carnivorous animals and birds were often found dead round about, the puma never seemed to return to the carcass to make another meal. The natives used to say that its sense of smell was so fine that it could at once detect if any one had been near the spot, and would then never approach the carcass again. We also tried pitfalls, with a live lamb tied above as a bait; but the wary beast never went near the place, and all we caught was one of our own horses, which one night fell into the pit. This puma made about twenty visits to my flock in the space of three months without our ever catching a glimpse of it, though one night we must have been very close on its tracks.

I happened to be at the window when the sheep came running towards the house, and dashed out at once without waiting to lift my rifle (I had my revolver in my belt), calling to the dogs as I went. As I was running across the corral I distinctly heard the thud of a heavy body against the wooden gates in one corner, and fired two shots in that direction. On reaching the spot I found the sheep the puma was carrying off—a big wether—still alive, but with its fore-leg and shoulder completely torn away from its body. The puma was evidently just making off with its prey when it heard me calling to the dogs, and in its hurry had not jumped high enough to clear the gates, got the sheep entangled in them, and had torn off the poor animal's shoulder in its efforts to get the remainder of the body free. I used afterwards to tie up a dog in that corner; and as at first it used to howl all night, the puma discontinued its visits. But directly our canine watchman got accustomed to the post and ceased making a noise, it made a raid one night at the other corner and carried off another sheep. This, however, was its last visit, as afterwards we tied dogs all round the corral, and thus stopped its depredations.

'The following summer I went one evening with two natives to sleep at a ranch three leagues off, where next day we were to secure some of our sheep which had strayed away and got mixed in a neighbouring flock. The ranch was a small one; and, as the night was very warm, we were all sleeping outside, and had just turned in when the flock, which was lying about a hundred yards off, came rushing towards the house. It was very

bright at the time, and the old native in charge caught a glimpse of something yellow in the midst of the sheep. He immediately made straight for his horse, which was picketed near, and, holloaing to the dogs, set off with them in pursuit at full gallop, calling out to us as he went, "Un leon ! Un leon !" ("A lion ! a lion !"). We mounted and followed as quickly as we could, and about two hundred yards from the hut found the dogs had brought the animal to bay in a large clump of *paja* grass. At first I thought it was a large yellow dog they had caught trying to steal a sheep ; but the peculiar snarling noise the animal made, and the way it arched its back, quickly made me aware what it was, though until then I had never seen a puma in its wild state.

I remarked that it showed very little inclination to fight, but tried to get through the clump and escape on the other side when it saw us approaching. The dogs, however, gave it no quarter, though they took care to keep out of the way of its formidable claws, which every now and then shot out with lightning rapidity at the boldest of its assailants. The old shepherd had meanwhile gone back to the ranch for his lasso ; and, watching his opportunity, he threw the coils round the puma's neck, and then started off at full gallop, dragging the half-throttled beast after him. Its cries as it was dragged along closely resembled those of a young child, and were something pitiful to hear ; but once the dogs saw their enemy stretched out and powerless they dashed at it from all sides, and we had great difficulty to save the hide from being torn to pieces. When we succeeded in driving the dogs away we found the

animal was quite dead, choked by the lasso, which the old native told me was the quickest and surest way of killing them. It was a large male, of a tawny yellow colour, with a dark stripe down the back, where the hair was of a much darker colour than that on its sides. It was very gaunt and thin, and appeared half-starved, or it would scarcely have approached so near a house where there were men, for we were all talking at the time the sheep began to run. The old shepherd said it must have been very weak, else he would scarcely have overtaken it with the dogs, as pumas are very quick in their movements, and will soon distance a horseman. Their grease is said to be a sovereign cure for rheumatism ; but there was not a particle to be found on the one we killed. I often thought it must have been the same that used to visit my flock, as it never returned the following winter. When they cannot get sheep and calves these animals prey upon partridges, armadillos, young deer, and even young ostriches (rheas) ; for several times I have discovered their lairs among the rocks by the armadillo shells and ostrich feathers lying outside.

'It was very lucky that the puma paid us such an early visit that night before we were asleep, as the sheep were not shut in the corral, and some little time before, not far from my ranch, a female and two cubs found a flock feeding one night at some little distance from the house, and drove it off in front of them, playing with the sheep as a cat does with a mouse, and disabling over a hundred, most of which were found to have their necks broken ; for the puma always strikes in the same place, on one side of the throat.'

THE ROMANCE OF MUTBY WORKHOUSE.

By Mrs ISABEL SMITH.



HE Guardians of Mutby Workhouse had just finished their ordinary meeting, when the Master, with rather a sheepish expression of countenance, observed :

'I think, gentlemen, I ought to lay before you a letter I received yesterday. First one of the sort I ever had.'

'Dear me, Tripp, what's that?' exclaimed the chaplain, otherwise the Rector of Mutby, commonly called Parson Weaver, a round, rosy-faced man, who more resembled a farmer than a clergyman.

The other members of the Board ceased their various conversations and looked expectant, all except Dr Evesham, the medical officer. For the last half-hour he had heard every impatient thud of his handsome chestnut's hoofs on the gravel outside, and felt that what might be an agreeable method of passing a little spare time to his con-

frères was a waste of precious moments to a busy man like himself. The whole business might be settled so much more quickly had they been concise instead of rambling and disputative. He had just been wondering how it could ever have been accepted as a popular fact that his sex were behindhand in the matter of speech, when this new delay occurred. He was a man of about thirty-five, quiet and reserved, living by himself, and accustomed to long, lonely drives about the Suffolk country on his professional errands.

'Well, Tripp, what is it?' repeated Parson Weaver rather impatiently. He had been interrupted in an interesting discussion with his neighbour, the Squire, about the trotting hackney and 'gate-post' mangolds that he had got first prizes for at the recent agricultural show.

The Master cleared his throat, and read, somewhat nervously, the following epistle :

Sept. 15, 18—.

To the Master of Mutby Workhouse.

SIR,—I am a native of Thorpe St Barnabas, and left this country forty years ago for Australia, where I made a comfortable fortune. I am now returned to my native land, but find nearly all my friends are gone and scattered. I am fifty-eight years of age, strong and hearty, and want a wife to help spend my savings. Can you recommend me a nice, respectable young woman among your inmates? I should prefer a single woman, not a widow, and would make her a good husband. Please write by return to Stephen Yaxley, Bell Inn, Thorpe St Barnabas, Suffolk.

A smile appeared on most of the faces round the baize-covered table as the Master finished.

'Dear me, Tripp,' said the parson, 'are you to be turned into a matrimonial agent in your old age?'

The Master half-laughed. 'It would seem so, sir. Curious letter, isn't it, gentlemen? But I thought it my duty to show it you.'

'Certainly, certainly,' echoed all. Dr Evesham was gazing absently out of the big window at a distant view of stained wherry-sails gliding up the river.

'What is your opinion, Evesham?' asked the Squire rather pettishly. He thought the medical officer might take a little interest in the subject, so that he could get back the sooner to the more interesting one of agriculture, and convince Parson Weaver that the prize for mangolds had been unfairly bestowed.

'My opinion? I have hardly had time to form one,' answered the doctor coolly. 'But I don't know that I should take any notice of the letter.'

The Master coughed deprecatingly. 'Well, sir, if I may be so bold as to suggest, I just mentioned the matter to my wife, and she says she thinks he might do for Susannah West.'

'*Susannah West!*' exclaimed the doctor, bringing the legs of his chair to the ground so violently as to make the others start.

'Is that the girl with the reddish hair?' asked the Squire, screwing up his eyes meditatively.

'And violet eyes,' said the parson; 'very much like some of the old masters' portraits of the Madonna.'

'The young woman's father was a small farmer at Cutton All Saints,' said the Master, 'and failed. She was ill for a long while after she got here. It seemed to prey upon her mind.'

'Yes, yes, we all remember,' said the medical officer. 'She had a low fever; it was a tough job to pull her through.'

'You ordered port wine for her, sir,' said the butcher cheerfully. He did not object to what some members called extravagance in the sick-dieting, which generally included a good supply of beef-tea.

'A sad case, a sad case,' said the Squire. 'But I don't see why the young woman can't go out to service.'

'Not strong enough,' replied the doctor, 'nor brought up to that sort of work. She has the

instincts of a lady, but unfortunately not enough education to fit her for teaching.'

'Then, from what I can see of it,' said the Squire, 'she will be here for the rest of her days—like old Molly Mobbs, that was reckoned to have cost the ratepayers over one thousand pounds altogether.'

'Unless she accepts this offer,' said the chaplain. 'Eh! gentlemen?'

All looked a little doubtful, as if not quite certain whether to treat the suggestion seriously.

At that moment a troop of little workhouse children filed past the window, followed by a young woman, clad in the lilac-check Union gown and hideous black straw Union bonnet with its purple ribbon.

'There goes Susannah West!' exclaimed the Master; 'she's just bringing the little ones home from a walk. A rare hand with them she is, too.'

The sun was shining straight upon the young woman in question, and the Board caught a glimpse of a dazzling wild-rose complexion and bands of red-gold waving hair.

'A very respectable girl indeed,' said the parson; 'and I for one suggest that we follow this offer up. We ought to make inquiries; and, though I have plenty to do in the parish' (the others exchanged quietly amused glances at this assertion, for it was well known that the parson took his parochial duties very lightly), 'I will go over to Thorpe St Barnabas myself and find out all I can of Mr Stephen Yaxley. But in the meantime, Tripp, say nothing to the girl.'

A special Board meeting was held a few days later. The parson's inquiries proved satisfactory, and it now only remained to inform the young woman of the proposal.

'I suppose you've quite settled it shall be Susannah West, gentlemen?' said the Master a little diffidently.

'I suppose so, Tripp. Why?' asked the Squire.

'Well, sir, for the matter of getting rid of one of the women, I'd sooner it was Mary Pott. She's such a grumbling creature—never satisfied.'

'So she is, Tripp; but then she's a widow, and that is against Mr Yaxley's specifications.'

Tripp scratched his head. 'Not a bad-looking woman, sir,' he observed.

'No, no. But a stipulation is a stipulation; and I, for my part, consider that Providence has sent this special offer on purpose for Susannah West.'

A murmur of approval followed this assertion; only the butcher ventured to demur: 'Seems a bit oldish for the girl, don't he, gentlemen?'

'Old? Pshaw! What's fifty-eight?' cried one and all. 'Better able to take care of a wife. Got a position,' &c.

'Yes, yes; to be sure. Of course that makes up,' said the butcher.

'Very well,' said the parson; 'then let it be settled once for all that he have Susannah West.'

'Yes, gentlemen; that is all very well as far

as it goes,' observed the medical officer, who had not yet spoken. 'But the question still remains, *Will Susannah West have him?*'

The others looked a little foolish, as though this side of the argument had not struck them.

'That we can soon find out,' said Parson Weaver irritably. 'Tripp, fetch the girl here.'

In a few minutes the girl stood before them; she looked shy and half-frightened, wondering what the Board could want of her.

'Ha! Susannah, my dear,' began the parson—he had called her Miss West in the days of her prosperity, but one cannot expect complimentary titles in the workhouse—'we have sent for you—because—in short—well, we have had a very advantageous offer, which we think will just suit you.'

Before Susannah could make any reply, the Squire, determined that the chaplain should not have it all his own way, exclaimed in his hearty voice, 'What would you say to a good home and a kind husband, my girl?'

The colour flooded Susannah's face; she gave one startled glance, then stood, with her eyes on the floor, nervously plaiting a corner of her checked apron.

'Perhaps it would be as well if I read the letter we have received,' said the parson, glaring disapproval at his neighbour for having forced his hand.

Then he put on his spectacles, and read in slow and ponderous tones Mr Stephen Yaxley's epistle, pausing every now and then to see the effect. If he expected rapturous gratitude when he finished he was disappointed. Susannah never raised her eyes. Her colour came and went, and her lips trembled; but she said not a word.

'Well, my girl,' cried the Squire, unable to restrain his impatience, 'what do you say to this? Isn't it a fine chance? I wouldn't think twice about it if I were you. Just look at your position. Here you are in the workhouse at your age, and, like a rat, without a friend in the world. Not any fault of yours, of course,' he added as a pained expression flitted across the girl's face.

'Perhaps she would like a little time to think it over,' suggested the butcher in his thick, husky voice.

'Have you got nothing to say, Susannah?' inquired the parson rather sternly.

The girl's fingers interlaced nervously.

'You are very kind, gentlemen; but I—I—don't know what to say.'

She looked round appealingly, desperately.

'Come, come, be quick to settle it, girl. We don't want another special meeting called,' cried the Squire.

The medical officer rose: 'I think, gentlemen, perhaps if I saw Miss West alone for a minute she might give me an answer. She feels embarrassed, I can see.'

'Quite right, Evesham,' said the parson. 'They can go into your room, Tripp, can't they?'

Tripp, jumping up with alacrity, led the way to his tobacco-scented little sanctum.

'Sit down, Susannah,' said the doctor kindly. 'Now don't be flurried. You have heard this offer; it seems a good one for you. But don't say "Yes" if you'd rather not. Just think it over a little.'

He turned his back on her, and, going over to the mantelpiece, examined a quaint old china group of an Englishman, Scotchman, and Irishman, seated together, entitled 'Auld Lang Syne.' A long silence followed; then Susannah spoke. She had a remarkably sweet, soft voice, and the doctor looked round quickly.

'If I do say "Yes," Dr Evesham,' she said tremblingly, 'it will be because—you—wish me to; for no other reason.'

She raised her eyes to him as she spoke. They were beautiful eyes, and sent a thrill through the medical officer.

'I wish you to say "Yes"?' he exclaimed, coming towards her.

'You have been so good to me; you saved my life when I first came here. I should never have recovered but for your care and attention. I always feel'—she clasped her hands tightly together—'you are the only friend I have, and there is nothing I would not do for your sake.'

The passionate warmth of her tone startled Dr Evesham. He caught both the hands with which, ashamed of her freedom, she was about to cover her face, and said tenderly, 'My poor girl! Then you shall never say "Yes" to this offer!'

The Board was waxing impatient, and the Squire and parson had almost broken their long friendship over the prize 'gate-post' mangolds, when Dr Evesham returned without Susannah West.

'Well, doctor, I hope you have brought the young woman to see reason,' said the former.

'I hope so,' replied the doctor dryly.

'Has she said "Yes," then?' asked the Squire and the butcher in a breath.

'She has to me, gentlemen,' said Dr Evesham, reddening. 'I am going to marry her myself!'

OUR APRIL.

Oh, but our land is lovable to-day!

What wonder if that poet held it dear

Whose cry for England's April still rings clear!

His wistful words are changed, perforce, to gay

On my love's lips and mine; but far away,

Across the world, they win a sigh, a tear,

From home-sick hearts who never, never veer

From that desire which nothing can allay.

Come, my sweet lady, let us walk abroad,

By gleaming meadow and by singing lane,

Inspire the savour of the hopeful sod,

Count the first flowers and catch the birds' refrain—

But 'mong our prayers make one for those whom God

Will not allow to see their land again.

J. J. BELL.